

Brown pick tilts balance for O'Malley

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ANNAPOLIS — Even before Martin O'Malley and Anthony G. Brown sealed their deal to create a ticket over dinner with their families Wednesday night, Democrats were buzzing about the impact on the party's contest for governor.

News Analysis

The choice of Prince George's Brown as the running mate for Baltimore Mayor O'Malley was widely praised for both geographic and racial balance. Brown is black; O'Malley is white.

The quick consensus was that the uphill battle facing Montgomery County Executive Douglas M. Duncan, the other leading Democrat in the race, just got a bit steeper.

O'Malley's offer of the job to Brown was widely expected, considering the two had met privately at least five times over the past few weeks to discuss the campaign and to see if their personalities and philosophies matched.

Those one-on-one meetings were in addition to negotiations between officials close to O'Malley and to Brown who were discussing the alliance behind the scenes to broker the deal. Democratic luminaries such as former governor Harry Hughes, former Attorney General Steve Sachs and former Prince George's County delegate Tim Maloney were all involved.

Brown and O'Malley met Saturday morning in Brown's Greenbelt law office to hash out more specifics, but they refused to talk about it until everything was finalized over Wednesday's dinner. While their children ate chicken wings and pizza, O'Malley eventually offered the job to Brown over a

crab cake dinner with their wives.

Duncan, behind in the polls and fighting to lift his name recognition beyond his base of support in Montgomery County, finds

himself in a familiar but unenviable position of following O'Malley's lead. Earlier this year, Duncan followed O'Malley in announcing his campaign for governor.

"He's going to be playing catch-up," said Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller Jr. (D-Dist. 27) of Chesapeake Beach, who has yet to endorse anyone in the governor's race. "The O'Malley campaign struck first by selecting a very attractive candidate who can campaign on his own and draw crowds in Baltimore, Montgomery County and Southern Maryland. [Duncan] is going to have a hard time finding someone with qualifications that can match Brown's."

Because O'Malley landed Brown, the ambitious and telegenic legislator-soldier from the Democratic bastion of Prince George's County, Duncan's selection will be subject to increased scrutiny and comparison.

"Mayor O'Malley picked a very qualified candidate," said Del. Charles E. Barkley (D-Dist. 39) of Germantown, a Duncan ally.

The Brown selection, he said, "is going to make it a little bit harder for Doug to balance out his ticket."

Del. Luiz R.S. Simmons, a Duncan supporter, praised Brown, but added that Duncan has plenty of time to build momentum.

"This is a marathon, not a sprint," said Simmons (D-Dist. 17) of Rockville.

O'Malley supporters contend that Brown has won universal accolades from the Democratic Party elite, and predicted the team will choke off momentum from the Duncan campaign.

"This selection casts a really long shadow over Duncan's viability as a candidate for governor," said Del. Galen R. Clagett (D-Dist. 3A) of Frederick.

"I think the O'Malley campaign hit a home run with Anthony Brown," said Montgomery County Councilman Thomas E. Perez (D-At large), who was vetted as a possible running mate for O'Malley. "It seems rather clear to me that the Duncan campaign didn't intend to make a choice this early. There clearly was a difference in philosophy."

O'Malley's announcement and statewide tour with Brown next week could influence Duncan to delay his selection.

One top Duncan ally suggested that Duncan should not select his running mate before the start of the General Assembly session next month, as had been planned. Instead, the ally said, the Duncan campaign should wait another 60 days to avoid the immediate comparisons to Brown.

A top Duncan aide said Thursday that the county executive's timeline for selecting a running mate has not changed, and it is likely to be made before session convenes the second week of January.

"[T]he choice Democratic primary voters face is not about Lieutenant Gubernatorial candidates, since we are sure Martin O'Malley will be friends with and respect Doug Duncan's pick as well," according to a statement from the Duncan campaign. "The choice is between Doug Duncan and Martin O'Malley."

Picking Brown

Brown's designated policy roles will be laid out on Monday, but sources close to the O'Malley campaign confirmed that Brown will have a major say in higher education, health care, economic

development and minority affairs. His expertise in the legislature has revolved around health care matters including issues such as medical malpractice reform.

O'Malley also chose Brown because there is a hope that, if victorious, they could push an ambitious legislative agenda their first year in office. The desire to emulate Virginia Gov. Mark R. Warner (D) and have a successful first session, as opposed to the rocky beginnings experienced by Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. (R) in 2003 and Gov. Parris N. Glendening (D) in 1995.

"I'm enthusiastic and eager to team up with Martin O'Malley," Brown (D-Dist. 25) of Mitchellville said Thursday. "We share a similar vision for the future of Maryland, and are both equally committed to working hard on behalf of Maryland families."

The Duncan statement made reference to the potential for a rift between Brown and O'Malley over legalizing slot machines. O'Malley has said he supports a limited number of slot machines at racetracks to save Baltimore-area jobs and keep the Preakness in Maryland. Brown and Duncan both oppose slots.

An O'Malley aide said Brown and the mayor agree that local governments should have more control if slots are installed.

Brown toyed with the idea of running for the U.S. Senate or for attorney general before deciding to join O'Malley's ticket. One of the keys to sealing the deal, according to those close to the negotiations, was that O'Malley would be supportive of Brown as his heir apparent.

O'Malley is viewed as a star in the national Democratic Party and has been criticized by some of his detractors as using the governor's mansion as a stepping stone to higher office.

What's next

O'Malley and Brown will make a formal announcement in Prince George's County on Monday morning to be followed by stops in Frederick, Hagerstown and a fund-raiser in Baltimore that evening. The duo then will make stops in Montgomery and Charles counties on Tuesday and on the

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Eastern Shore on Wednesday.

Brown will resign his seat on the Special Committee on State Employee Rights and Protections, the 12-member committee investigating Ehrlich's hiring and firing practices.

But he intends to retain his powerful role as House majority whip.

Del. Richard S. Madaleno Jr., who used to be Duncan's Annapolis lobbyist and remains a close supporter, said Wednesday that Brown should give up his leadership position, too, because it could put the 98-member Democratic caucus in a precarious position.

"It will be hard to distinguish whether he is taking a position for the O'Malley campaign or for the Democratic caucus," said Madaleno (D-Dist. 18) of Kensington. "It could lead to questions of his motivations, and it will become a challenge for the speaker to keep the caucus united."

House Speaker Michael E. Busch (D-Dist. 30) of Annapolis, who has been Brown's mentor in the General Assembly, dismissed any talk of removing Brown from leadership.

"Running for higher office should not take away from a legislator's duties in the House," he said. "It does not change their responsibilities."

House Majority Leader Kumar P. Barve (D-Dist. 17) of Gaithersburg, a Duncan supporter, agreed that Brown should remain whip as did Simmons and Barkley.

The Duncan campaign is still considering first-term Sen. Gwendolyn T. Britt (D-Dist. 47) of Landover Hills, a civil rights activist, as a potential running mate. Del. Melony G. Griffith (D-Dist. 25) of Upper Marlboro has been mentioned along with some Baltimore-area lawmakers.

Ehrlich, meanwhile, is not expected to replace Lt. Gov. Michael S. Steele (R), who is running for the U.S. Senate, anytime soon. Prince George's County Executive Wayne K. Curry (D) remains as a possibility for Ehrlich, something that Curry did not deny when asked about it Monday.

Duncan has been criticized for the handling of the running mate selection process, particularly after his campaign manager was quoted as naming Baltimore City Councilman Keiffer Mitchell (D)

and University of Maryland, Baltimore County President Freeman Hrabowski as finalists. Both men said they were not interested.

Duncan brushed off the criticism and refused to talk about his timeline for selecting a running mate.

"We'll make a decision when we get the right person," Duncan said. "I can't control what they tell reporters."

Staff Writer Douglas Tallman contributed to this report.